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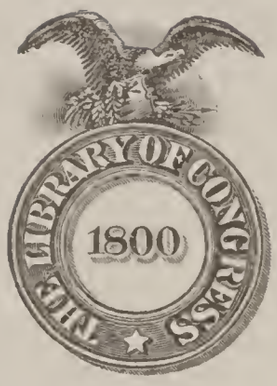

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An Alleged Proclamation of President Lincoln.

The following statement in reference to an alleged proclamation of Mr. Lincoln, said to have been prepared but never published, has been going the rounds of the press.

The letter from Judge Campbell, which we append, shows the inaccuracy of at least a part of the "unwritten history," and we doubt not that a thorough sifting would prove that the whole story is a *canard*. Who can give us additional facts?

[From Washington letter to New York Sun.]

In the dark and uncertain days preceding the outbreak of the rebellion there was much doubt in the mind of Mr. Lincoln regarding the disposition of the people North of the recognized dividing line between freedom and slavery to sustain aggressive measures for the preservation of the Union. State after State had seceded, and no demonstration had been made at the North to counteract the force of such movements at the South. On the contrary, there were public men who openly advocated a division of the Union into such parts as would suit geographical lines and their own interests and ambition. Notably, Mr. Hendricks favored a northwestern confederacy; some New Yorkers saw in the confusion of the times an opportunity to make their city the Venice of America; and some Californians thought a republic on the Pacific, with San Francisco for its commercial and political capital, would develop into mighty proportions before the end of the century. Horace Greeley had advocated in the *Tribune* peaceable separation and boldly proclaimed: "Let the erring sisters go in peace." The Indianapolis *Journal*, in the West, inspired by an ambition to "take a position," occupied the same ground. The Northern States sent peace commissioners to Washington to plead with the South for a peaceable solution of the difficulties and a maintenance of the Union. The Government, under Mr. Buchanan, did nothing to repress the military preparations making in the South, and when Mr. Lincoln was inaugurated there were nine States defying his authority and ready for war. His administration had a most formidable opposition in the two remaining States that seceded, and in those also that attempted to do so. His support at the North, in the event of war, he regarded as uncertain, and anarchy appeared inevitable.

In this condition of affairs commissioners appointed by Governor Pickens, of South Carolina, appeared on the scene, and through Judge Campbell, then late of the Supreme Court, who had resigned on the secession of Louisiana, commenced a negotiation for the surrender to that State of the Government forts and property within its limits. The commissioners were also aided by Dr. Todd,

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of Kentucky, a brother of Mrs. Lincoln, who was in harmony with the views and actions of the South Carolinians. He was a temporary habitant at the White House, and acquired information in a private way that no one could have obtained in an official capacity, and which was made use of as time and circumstances required. The negotiations of South Carolina with the Government failed—not because of an indisposition to entertain the proposition submitted, but on account of the precipitate action of South Carolina troops in bombarding Fort Sumter. This made a peaceable dissolution of the Union a matter of impossibility and war an inevitable necessity.

While these negotiations were pending, however, a proclamation had been prepared recognizing the fact of the secession of certain States, and virtually acknowledging their independence, surrendering to them stated powers of the General Government over property and places within their limits, and guaranteeing them peaceable possession of the same on conditions specified. This proclamation had the sanction of Mr. Wade, of Ohio, and was in accordance with Mr. Greeley's frequently expressed views. With the appearance of the proclamation was to be an editorial in the Washington and New York papers sustaining the action of the administration. This was also prepared and held ready for use when the occasion demanded it. But the action at Fort Sumter changed all this, and a proclamation was issued instead for 75,000 men for three months to suppress rebellion; and war was thus accepted by an unwilling Government and people.

The proclamation calling for troops is a matter of history; that previously prepared looking to peace is not, and its existence must be proved from other sources than official records. The evidence on which it rests is the following statement: Mr. A. T. Cavis, a proof-reader at the Government printing office, is a gentleman of intelligence and culture, and of undoubted veracity. He is a native of Pennsylvania, but went to South Carolina in 1847, and remained until after the war. Previous to and during the war he was editor of the South Carolina *Guardian*, published at Columbia. His position gave him acquaintance and association with the State authorities, and he speaks from personal knowledge regarding the matters herein stated.

The proclamation looking to a peaceful separation of the States was obtained by Dr. Todd while at the White House, and by him given to Governor Pickens. It is not known how he came in possession of it, and it is not necessary to inquire into that now. But that he had the original draft of the proclamation, that it and the editorial designed to accompany its publication were written on official paper bearing the impress "Executive Mansion," is undoubtedly true. The proclamation and editorial were shown by Governor Pickens to Mr. Cavis, and by the latter published in his paper, the South Carolina *Guardian*. In the burning of Columbia by Sherman's troops the office and files of the *Guardian* were de-

stroyed, and there is no copy of the paper extant containing these documents. The original papers, however, are in the possession of Mrs. Pickens, at Edgefield, South Carolina, who has carefully preserved all the books and manuscripts collected by her late husband.

This is a most important and interesting fact connected with the unwritten history of the rebellion. It shows how difficult it was even for the most sagacious men to "read the signs of the times," and the events following proved that the people knew more than their rulers and assumed leaders.

Letter from Judge Campbell.

NEW ORLEANS, 11th December, 1878.

DR. J. WILLIAM JONES, *Secretary Southern Historical Society:*

My Dear Sir—Your letter of the 4th instant, inclosing a printed copy of a letter addressed to the New York *Sun* and published as containing "unwritten war history," and requesting some explanation on the subject, has been received.

The letter represents that after the inauguration of President Lincoln Governor Pickens, of South Carolina, appointed commissioners to visit Washington city, and who opened negotiations with the President, through me, for the surrender of the forts and property of the United States within that State; that there was a fair prospect of success and of a peaceable dissolution of the Union as the result of the negotiations, but the precipitate action of South Carolina troops in bombarding Fort Sumter made such a dissolution impossible and a war inevitable. The letter says I had previously resigned the office of judge of the Supreme Court of the United States because of the secession of Louisiana.

I have no information that will support any portion of this statement as matter of fact. I had no connection with commissioners appointed by Governor Pickens, and do not remember that he appointed any to visit President Lincoln. I conducted no negotiations with President Lincoln to effect a dissolution of the Union at that time, and have no reason to believe that he would have entertained such a proposition at any time. I remained a member of the Supreme Court of the United States until after the surrender of Fort Sumter. My only intercourse with the Executive Department of the United States having reference to the surrender of forts and property was that which Justice Nelson and myself had with Secretary Seward in March, 1861, and which continued on my part until the bombardment of Sumter. The facts in respect to this intercourse I have communicated to the Society, and were published in one of the earliest of its numbers. The determination of President Lincoln to abandon Fort Sumter voluntarily had been changed prior to the bombardment, and the bombardment

was superinduced by his attempt to supply it with provisions, thereby to overcome the necessity for yielding it.

The bombardment was ordered by the Confederate Government, at Montgomery, and was not the result of any precipitancy on the part of the South Carolina troops.

Very respectfully yours,

JOHN A. CAMPBELL.

We may simply add to the above that the efforts that have been made by Northern writers—that shine out conspicuously in the school "histories" and garnish their "religious" literature—to prove that the South "fired the first gun" and forced the North into *a war of defence*, are all utter perversions of the facts. The truth is that the whole aim and policy of the South was peace, not war—to be let alone, not to attack the North—and that when at last Major Anderson violated the agreement to "preserve intact the military status" by moving from Moultre into Sumter—and Mr. Seward violated his solemnly-plighted word to the Confederate commissioners by attempting to reinforce and provision Sumter, and thereby convert it into a fortress for the subjugation of Charleston—"the first gun" had been virtually fired by the United States Government, and the reduction of the fort was *as purely an act of self-defence and self-preservation* as is to be found in all history. Indeed, the annals of no people struggling for independence afford an example of a more complete *defensive* war than was ours, nor a more stainless record than we can show in the conduct of the great struggle. And we may proudly await the verdict of history in the full confidence that it will be that of England's accomplished scholar (Professor P. S. Worsley), who said, in his beautiful stanzas dedicating to General R. E. Lee his translation of the Iliad:

"Ah, realm of tombs!—but let her bear
This blazon to the last of times:
No nation rose so white and fair,
Or fell so pure of crimes."

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